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Vietnam: Ousts Americans

BY FLORA LEWIS

NEW YORK—While attention is focused on Vietnam's one-man electoral circus, American volunteers working on village development programs have been quietly forced out of the country.

It is another reflection of growing anti-Americanism in South Vietnam, less and less concealed as troops are withdrawn and U.S. influence wanes.

State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey revealed how far it had gone when he said last week that the special alert confining GIs to their bases was to head off anti-American incidents during elections to the National Assembly. American spokesmen in Saigon made it appear that the alert was to prepare troops against possible Viet Cong attacks, but McCloskey was more candid. It isn't the Communists U.S. officials are worried about, he indicated.

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The ouster of the volunteers is a foretaste of the bitter problems that are going to arise as the United States dawdles its way from Vietnam. They are the members of the International Voluntary Service team, young specialists in agriculture or education who have been helping Vietnamese villagers. The volunteers are paid \$80 a month, plus a meager allowance providing a living standard equal to the villagers.

IVS was founded in 1953, a private, nonpolitical organization which later served as a model for the Peace Corps. Its first teams went to South Vietnam in 1957.

Until the 1968 Tet offensive, when two IVS men were caught in Hue and disappeared during Viet Cong occupation of the city, there were normally about 180 IVS people stationed around the countryside. Their number dwindled after that.

"It was harder and harder to find places where even Vietnamese speaking, apolitical development workers could get the confidence of the local people," says John Schafer, now posted at IVS headquarters in Washington.

And yet the IVS had a reputation for idealism, independence and selfless work in such things as helping raise rice and banana production with better methods.

Their latest two-year contract expires this month and has not been renewed. President Nguyen Van Thieu instructed his cabinet not to negotiate any further agreements with IVS, and the 31 volunteers remaining in the country have been

non-Americans. They also have to go.

Some of the volunteers, according to private reports from Saigon, feel Thieu was anxious to get rid of them before the presidential elections Oct. 3. Their close knowledge of the country, their language ability, their involvement with local people would have put them in a position to see just how the balloting was really conducted.

But Schafer thinks the problem is much deeper and more enduring. It was a former IVS worker, Don Luce, who led two visiting congressmen to the "tiger cages" in the prison on Con Son island. It was Ron Moreau, an IVS worker, who tipped American reporters to the South Vietnamese army's use of terrified villagers at Ba Chuc as human minesweepers. True, it wasn't Moreau's business to save lives, he was only supposed to teach children, but after trying vainly to get Vietnamese and American officials to intervene, he turned to the press.

Anyone who has traveled about Vietnam has met numbers of local officials, farmers, teachers who speak with overwhelming gratitude for the young volunteers. Civil servants in Saigon are enthusiastic.

But Thieu is not, and neither it seems is U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker. Nobody has questioned the value of the work IVS has done, but its workers haven't always pretended to be blind and mute and their disclosures have at times been embarrassing to top authority.

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Nonetheless, IVS has also come under fire from Vietnamese leftists as a CIA front, because of its link to the American AID program. The Saigon newspaper Tin Sang recently published a long attack charging that the IVS role was to fool the people into believing American policy aims to help Vietnamese peasants.

As Hugh Manke, IVS director in South Vietnam, wrote in a recent letter, "It's a bad time to be a foreigner in Vietnam."

It isn't going to get better until all Americans are withdrawn. And the longer that takes, the poorer the chances that any U.S. programs, even those which are purely humanitarian, can succeed. The United States has a moral debt of reconstruction and rehabilitation aid to a country it devastated so widely in order to "save." The way things are going, even after the withdrawal, debt may fail, the ultimate humiliation of America's Vietnam exper-

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THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS

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THE night sky blotted out the lights of receding Hanoi as our plane quickly took on altitude. Only two hours' flight separate Hanoi from the Laotian capital of Vientiane. I have flown this route repeatedly in recent years. The time passes quickly in conversation with the pilot of the plane servicing the International Supervision and Control Commission. The pilot, who makes the Saigon-Pnom Penh-Vientiane-Hanoi flight once weekly, has become a carrier of the latest news. "Yesterday," he told me on this occasion, "the Tan Son Nhut airfield in Saigon was shelled, there was a hurricane in Pnom Penh, an attempt was made on the life of Colonel Phethrasi, the Pathet Lao representative in Vientiane."

I am acquainted with Colonel Phethrasi, have often visited him in his Vientiane residence which is blockaded by government army and police patrols.

"Is Phethrasi-all-right?" I asked the pilot.

"He wasn't hurt, but one of his bodyguards was. Haven't heard the details of the attack yet."

Vientiane's shabby old Wattay airfield was dimly lit. While a few sleepy officials quickly attended to the formalities I watched a group of about forty men in the uniform of Saigon army pilots board a green bus waiting near a sign saying "Welcome to Vientiane."

"South Vietnamese airmen," a young porter explained. "Come to attend That Louang, our national holiday, as a reward for distinguished service."

A quarter of an hour later my taxi

stopped at the "Constellation" Hotel. Maurice Cavalier, its owner, was an old acquaintance. The only vacant room he had was next door to the South Vietnamese pilots I'd seen at the airfield.

"I hope you don't mind?" he laughed. "One thing, though, they're not likely to bother you. They've been strictly forbidden to talk to foreigners for fear they might spill the beans about their heroic deeds."

The next morning the Novosti Press Agency correspondent in Vientiane, Yuri Kosinsky, and I went to see the That Louang festivities. We drove along the highway hugging the steep left bank of the now shallow Mekong and then along the old dam. A wide road led to the northeast part of the city where stands the kingdom's holy shrine, the That Louang, pagoda, built back in the middle of the 16th century. Its gilded spire rises high above the coconut palms as though to accentuate the majestic landscape. All the notabilities of the country had gathered there for the ceremony opened by King Sisavang Vatthana.

It was there at the pagoda that I met Colonel Phethrasi. I was glad to see him as hale and hearty as ever. Before entering the pagoda we walked about a while and he told me about the raid on his residence, often referred to in Vientiane as "Pathet Lao House," concluding his story with the comment:

"This wasn't the first and won't be the last act of provocation against us."

Sure enough, less than a month later



Pathet Lao House was attacked again. The provocateurs who hurled grenades at it were recruited and trained by Laotian reactionaries and CIA agents.

THE CIA IN VIENTIANE

On May 17, 1964, the United States, in gross violation of the Geneva agreements of 1962, savagely bombed Laotian territory. Official Washington continually assured the world that the U.S. was not interfering in Laotian affairs, but towards the end of last year, when American aggression had been escalated to such proportions that it could no longer be concealed, it was forced to admit that it had "a few advisers" in Laos and that the Nixon Administration had sanctioned the bombardment of Laos. In the course of the current year the U.S. flew 500 and more missions daily over Laotian territory.

In March 1970 the White House also admitted that there were 1,040 Americans in Laos (at the end of 1969 the world press had already reported the presence of 12,000 American military and civilians). More, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that the CIA was employing foreign mercenaries as well